

25 January 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: IRAN

I. Our estimates have long pointed out that profound political and social change is virtually inevitable in Iran. (e. g., NIE 34-61, dated 28 February 1961). Despite the noteworthy efforts made by Prime Minister Amini in the past several months to direct the process of change into constructive and evolutionary channels, the political situation in Iran remains extremely fragile, and spontaneous outbreaks such as the recent student disturbances could easily precipitate a revolutionary upheaval.

II. The disturbances were exploited promptly and vigorously both by National Front elements -- who feel that Amini's moderate reform program has not gone far enough -- and by reactionary landlord and court circles -- who fear that Amini's reforms are beginning to strike at their vested interests.

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DOCUMENT NO. 7
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE:

DATE: 17 JUN 1980 REVIEWER:

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III. The Shah appears to be giving his full support to Amini. The Shah has asked General Bakhtiar, former chief of the Iranian Security Services, to leave the country. Bakhtiar has been highly critical of Amini and would like to succeed him. The Shah has also given Amini full support in the measures the Prime Minister has taken against the National Front.

IV. Amini's main problem is to suppress the unrest without completely alienating liberal-minded elements and playing into the hand of reactionary groups. The exiling of Bakhtiar and the reported arrests of rightist, as well as National Front, leaders suggest that the Prime Minister is coping with the present crisis wisely and effectively.

V. We remain unable to see any alternative to the Amini government which would not be likely to be detrimental to the political and economic progress and stability of Iran. However, Amini is unlikely to be able to gain much independent support for some time to come; consequently, his government will remain vulnerable both to continued threats from left and right and to the possibility of the Shah's withdrawing his support..

ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman
Board of National Estimates

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